

Highland Messenger.

LIFE IS ONLY TO BE VALUED AS IT IS USEFULLY EMPLOYED.

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, FRIDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 25, 1840.

NUMBER 28

VOLUME I.

R. B. FINLAY & J. ROBERTS, EDITORS.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.

BY J. M. CHRISTY.

Terms.—The "MESSENGER" is published at Two Dollars per annum, in advance, or Five Dollars at the end of the year.

For advertising, insertions will be made at the rate of One Dollar per square for the first, and Twenty-Five Cents for each subsequent insertion.

All communications must be post paid.

MISCELLANEOUS.

(From a Western Paper.)

THE PIASA.

AN INDIAN TRADITION OF ILLINOIS.

No part of the United States, not even the highlands of the Hudson, can vie, in its wild and romantic scenery, with the bluffs of Illinois. On one side of the river, often at the water edge, a perpendicular wall of rock rises to the height of some hundred feet. Generally on the opposite shore is a level bottom or prairie, of several miles in length, extending to a similar bluff that runs parallel with the river.

One of these ranges commences at Alton and extends, with few intervals, for miles along the left bank of the Illinois. In descending the river to Alton, the traveller will observe between that town and the mouth of the Illinois, a narrow ravine, through which a small stream discharges its waters into the Mississippi. That stream is the Piasa. Its name is Indian, and signifies in the language of the Illini, "the bird that devours men." Near the mouth of that stream, on the smooth and perpendicular face of the bluff, at an elevation which no human art can reach, is cut the figure of an enormous bird, with its wings extended.

The bird which this figure represents, was created by the Indians the Piasa, and from its name is derived the name of the stream.

The tradition of the Piasa is still current among all the tribes of the Upper Mississippi, and those who have inhabited the valley of the Illinois—and is briefly this: Many thousands of years before the arrival of the pale-faces, when the great magoos and mastodons, whose bones are dug up, were still living in this land of green prairies, there existed a bird of such dimensions that he could easily carry off, in his claws, a full grown deer. Having obtained the taste of human flesh, from that time he could prey upon nothing else. He was as crafty as he was powerful; would dart suddenly upon an Indian, bear him off into one of the caves in the bluff, and devour him.

Hundreds of warriors attempted for years to destroy him, but without success. Whole villages were nearly depopulated, and consumption spread throughout all the tribes of the Illini. At length, Outoga, a chief whose fame as a warrior extended even beyond the great lakes, separating himself from the rest of his tribe, fasted in solitude for the space of a whole moon, and prayed to the Great Spirit—the master of life—that he would protect his children from the Piasa. On the last night of his fast the Great Spirit appeared to him in a dream, and directed him to select twenty of his warriors, each armed with a bow and poisoned arrow, and conceal them in a designated spot. Near the place of their concealment, another warrior was to stand in view, as a victim for the Piasa, which they must shoot the instant that he pounced upon his prey. When the chief awoke in the morning, he thanked the Great Spirit, and then returning to his tribe he related their dream.

The warriors were quickly selected and placed in ambush, as directed. Outoga fired himself as the victim. He was willing to die for his tribe. Placing himself in view of the bluff, he soon saw the Piasa perched on the cliff, eyeing his prey. Outoga drew up his manly form to its utmost, and planting his feet firmly upon the earth, began to chant the death song of a warrior. A moment after, the Piasa rose into the air, and as swift as a thunderbolt he darted down upon the chief. Scarcely had he reached his victim, when every bow was string, and every arrow sent to the feather to his body. The Piasa uttered a wild, fearful scream, that resounded far over the opposite side of the river, and expired. Outoga was safe. Not an arrow—not even the talons of the bird—had touched him. The Master of life, in admiration of the generous deed of Outoga, had held for him an invisible shield. In memory of this event, the image of the Piasa was engraved on the bluff.

Such is the Indian tradition. Of course do not vouch for its truth. This much however is certain: the figure of a large bird cut into the solid rock, is still there, and at a height that is perfectly inaccessible.

How and for what purpose it was made, I leave for others to determine.—Even at this day an Indian never passes the spot in his canoe without firing his gun at the figure of the bird. The marks of balls on the rock are almost innumerable.

Near the close of March, of the present year, I was induced to visit the bluffs below the mouth of the Illinois, and above that of the Piasa. My curiosity was principally directed to the examination of a cave connected with the above traditions, as one of those to which the bird had carried his human victims. Preceded by an intelligent guide who carried a spade, I set out on my excursion. The cave was extremely difficult of access, and at one point of our progress I stood at an elevation of more than one hundred and fifty feet on the face of

the bluff, with barely room to sustain one foot. The unbroken wall towered above me, while below was the river. After a long and perilous clambering we reached the cave which was about fifty feet above the river. By the aid of a long pole placed on the projecting rock and the upper end touching the mouth of the cave, we succeeded in entering it. Nothing could be more impressive than the view from the entrance of this cavern. The Mississippi was rolling in silent grandeur beneath us; high over our heads a single cedar hung its branches over the cliff, on the top of which was seated a bald eagle. No other sound or sign of life was near us. A sabbath stillness rested upon the scene—not a cloud was in the heavens—not a breath of air was stirring. The broad Mississippi lay before us, calm and smooth as a lake. The landscape presented the same wild aspect as it did before it met the eye of the white man.

The roof of the cavern was vaulted, the top of which was hardly less than twenty-five feet in height. The shape of the cave was irregular, but so far as I could judge, the bottom would average twenty by thirty feet. The floor of this cave through its whole extent, was a mass of human bones.—Sculls and other bones were mingled together in the utmost confusion. To what depth they extended I am unable to decide; we dug to the depth of three or four feet in every quarter of the cavern, and still we found only bones. The remains of thousands must have been deposited here.—How, and by whom, and for what purpose, it is impossible to conjecture.

J. R.

(From the Carolina Planter.)

BUNCOMBE COUNTY, N. C.

Flat Rock (so called from a bare flat granite rock in the neighborhood) is a settlement on the highest part of the Blue Ridge on the public road to Asheville. As a summer resort for invalids, especially those who suffer from nervous affections, or such cases as are attended with languor, debility and enfeebled action, no atmosphere probably in the United States is better adapted. The air is light, elastic and bracing, dry and exhilarating, and possessing an influence on many which is positively delightful. To those affected with dyspeptic disorders, exercise constantly in such an atmosphere is of more importance than the usual routine of medicines which suffering humanity is willing to undergo.

"Promi natura sumus ad nostram perniciem," is applicable to the dyspeptic disposition to be physicked—Doctors are abused for giving physic, and charged with all the evils which medicines produce, while almost all dyspeptics are trying the prescription of this or that friend who has been similarly affected. They are moping about, eating what is indigestible and consulting every one for some remedy, while the most powerful tonic qualities of air and exercise are usually not noticed. Mr. Abernethy's direction to "live on sixpence a day and earn it," was a good one, provided bodily labor be used; hard working folks who gain their daily bread by corporal exertions are rarely dyspeptic. It is chiefly those who pass a sedentary life, or are prevented from taking regular and habitual exercise, or live luxuriously, that suffer with this protean malady. Beddy exercise alone will not give relief—the mind must also be exercised—if a man will walk five miles for exercise, it will not give relief—the mind must also be interested—if a man walk five miles for exercise, it will be of little service to him—give him a gun or let him botanize or Audubonize in the woods, and what was a task will soon become a pleasure.

The writer of these desultory notes for four years "followed wrens and snow birds for the hides and feathers," as a gentleman once said in ridicule of his pursuits—but he found in his enthusiasm after small game, besides pleasurable occupation of the mind a share of health that fully atoned for the tedium of tangle through the woods after red-headed woodpeckers, &c. If every dyspeptic would take one twentieth part of the physic which he usually is trying (and generally he may do with none) and would spend more time in walking exercise, restrict his diet, and have his mind occupied with something which will keep his attention off from his disorder, he will gain in health—and more rapidly if he will breathe the pure air of the neighborhood of Flat Rock.

It is surprising that the mountains of Buncombe, the Switzerland of the United States, should not be a more favoured resort for invalids. The accommodations for travellers who are not fastidious, are very fair, and the substantial fare of the country good enough for even captious stomachs.—That improvements in cookery to the style of a city life should be found through the mountains, is hardly in reason to be expected—many of the house keepers have not credit for their exertions to please, and sometimes become careless when they find their efforts to give satisfaction meet with exaggerated reports against their houses. The improvements in the houses of entertainment in ten years that we have known them, are certainly marked—but French cooks and *pates des fois gras* are not yet introduced. Jesting apart, we really think injustice is done to worthy people by unreflecting visitors who expect too much, and are soured by disappointment. We have been at tables well kept and furnished with neatness and variety, and found many present who were constantly grumbling—and frequently one inveterate grumbler will tincture a whole party, so liable are we in

this world to join in with a pack in running down any thing.

The neighborhood of Flat Rock is becoming more thickly settled every year, and beautiful residences are springing up on the adjacent mountains in all directions. For persons who are disposed to change the air in the summer, the top of the Blue Ridge is as pure an atmosphere as can be found. There has been very little company in the mountains this season, the times are so hard, and many who have been in the habit of resorting to this delightful country have the consolation of the apothecary (in *Romco and Juliet*.) in remaining at home, "my poverty and not my will consents."

Having spent a day at Flat Rock we departed after dinner to Asheville, and never have we enjoyed a more delicious airing. The sun was bright as it ever shone—the air was balmy, and sweetly soft—the breeze from the mountains gentle, and steady, and the pleasure of the ride was much enhanced by the fine road over which we passed.

Within our view, on the left, the Mountain range was beautifully extended, and the far blue outline of the distant groups strikingly interesting. The descent to the valley of the Swannanoe near Asheville is one of the richest landscapes we have ever seen. The verdure is remarkably exuberant, the shades of color of every varied hue, and the tinge of yellow of approaching Autumn gives a change to the early fading leaf which is pleasant to the eye.

We returned to Flat Rock on Tuesday, and found an invitation to the birth-day Ball of the lady of the Mountain Lodge. Here we were agreeably surprised to find a large assembly of fair Mountain ladies. The gentlemen were quite attentive, and the spirited exertions of the old fiddler soon set in motion the life of the party. The cotillion, the reel, the country dance and the waltz, having been enjoyed to a late hour, "a change came o'er the spirit of the dream," and a sumptuous entertainment at the supper table gave a zest to the pleasures of the evening, which was quite refreshing. The proud tenant of the park had furnished his contribution to the feast, and the pheasants of the mountain branches were conspicuous on the board. The enjoyments of the evening were appreciated by all and our company retired from this most sociable meeting delighted with the elegant hospitality of the mountains.

Our excellent host insisted on our remaining another day to do execution to the remaining haunch—and could the antlered monarch of the park have foreseen, that over his mortal remains, there would be collected so worthy a company, he would not doubt have felt honored and yielded willingly his body for so generous an occasion.—The representative of England's Queen, the Consul of the Citizen King, the President of the Rail Road Company, one of our favorite Judges, with a number of gentlemen from the mountains, and lastly, the Editor of the Carolina Planter, who has a taste for natural science, did full justice to the merits of the noble buck. Though many may prefer to witness the gambols and exercise of the phylax animal among the shrubbery and beautiful grounds of the mountain park, yet in this utilitarian age, there are some of us who are satisfied with the quiet repose of the smoking dish. And when next our respected friend shall celebrate another natal day, (may they be many!) with "the feast of venison, and the flow of wine," may we have a good excuse to visit the mountains, merely as an Editor, to see whether there can be found another stag of equal deserts.

(From the Albany Cultivator.)

BERKSHIRE VS. COMMON HOGS.—It is often asserted that the difference in breed is more in the difference of keeping than any thing else; in fact I believe I have tried hard to make myself believe this doctrine; but experience, that good old teacher, has entirely eradicated the error. The Berkshire pigs that I procured this summer from A. B. Allen, of Buffalo, which, when delivered in my yard, cost me \$32, I would not give for thirty-two common pigs of the same age; and yet I will give them freely to any believer in the popular error, "that the difference is all in keeping," if he will produce a pair of the common kind of equal age and equal keeping, that equal these in any particular. The fact is, the point must be given up, that there is "a proper site of odds" in the broods of hogs. "A hog is a hog," is the end of argument with some hog-fish arguers. So is a sheep a sheep, but I defy any and all men to make a coarse wool sheep fine by feeding or breeding, until all the coarse wool blood is bred out. A dog is a dog too, yet I suppose no one will attempt to argue that there is no difference in them. He might just as well argue that, as that there is little or no difference in the breed of hogs. In this case "seeing is believing," and feeling is knowing. It is a fact that speaks loudly in favor of the Berkshires, that all who buy them are satisfied with the improvement. So much for Berkshires. Though I do not mean to exclude every other variety, because I fully believe that in some respects, the Irish Graziers, Woburn, China, &c. are equal to the Berkshires; but I would earnestly advise every owner of aligators and handpicks to procure "an improved breed of hogs" immediately.

A few miles south of Beavroot is a caravanserai, called the Rhan of Onis or Jonas, according to tradition the spot where the prophet was swallowed by the whale.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Message FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO THE TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS, At the commencement of the Second Session of the Twenty-Sixth Congress.

Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

Our devout gratitude is due to the Supreme Being for having graciously continued to our beloved country, through the vicissitudes of another year, the invaluable blessings of health, plenty, and peace.—Seldom has this favored land been so generally exempted from the ravages of disease or the labor of the husbandman been more amply rewarded; and never before have our relations with other countries been placed on a more favorable basis than that which they so happily occupy at this critical juncture in the affairs of the world. A rigid and persevering abstinence from all interference with the domestic and political relations of other States, alike due to the genius and distinctive character of our Government and to the principles by which it is directed; a faithful observance, in the management of our foreign relations, of the practice of speaking plainly, dealing justly, and of requiring truth and justice in return, as the best conservatives of the peace of nations; a strict impartiality in our manifestations of friendship, in the commercial privileges we concede, and those we require from others: these, accompanied by a disposition as prompt to maintain, in every emergency, our own rights, as we are from principle averse to the invasion of those of others, have given to our country and Government a standing in the great family of nations, of which we have just cause to be proud, and the advantages of which are experienced by our citizens throughout every portion of the earth to which their adventurous and enterprising spirit may carry them. Few, if any, remain insensible to the value of our friendship, or ignorant of the terms on which it can be acquired, and by which it can none be preserved.

A series of questions of long standing, difficult in their adjustment, and important in their consequences, in which the rights of our citizens and the honor of the country were deeply involved, have, in the course of a few years, (the most of them during the successful administration of my immediate predecessor,) been brought to a satisfactory conclusion; and the most important of those remaining are, I am happy to believe, in a fair way of being speedily and satisfactorily adjusted.

With all the powers of the world our relations are those of honorable peace. Since your adjournment, nothing serious has occurred to interrupt or threaten this desirable harmony. If clouds have lowered above the other hemisphere, they have not cast their portentous shadows upon our happy shores. Bound by no entangling alliances, yet linked by a common nature and interest with the other nations of mankind, our aspirations are for the preservation of peace, in whose solid and civilizing triumphs all may participate with a generous emulation. Yet it behooves us to be prepared for any event, and to be always ready to maintain those just and enlightened principles of national intercourse, for which this Government has ever contended. In the shock of contending empires, it is only by assuming a resolute bearing, and clothing themselves with defensive armor, that neutral nations can maintain their independent rights.

The excitement which grew out of the territorial controversy between Great Britain and the United States, having in a great measure subsided, it is hoped that a favorable period is approaching for its final settlement. Both Governments must be now convinced of the dangers with which the question is fraught. In my last annual message you were informed that the proposition for a commission of exploration and survey promised by Great Britain had been received, and that a counterproject, including also a provision for the certain and final adjustment of the limits in dispute was then before the British Government for its consideration. The answer of that Government, accompanied by additional propositions of its own, was received, through its minister here since your separation. These were promptly considered; such as were deemed correct in principle, and consistent with a due regard to the just rights of the United States and of the State of Maine, concurred in; and the reasons for dissenting from the residue, with an additional suggestion on our part, communicated by the Secretary of State to Mr. Fox. The minister, not feeling himself sufficiently instructed upon some of the points raised in the discussion, felt it to be his duty to refer the matter to his own Government for its further decision. Having now been for some time under its advisement, a speedy answer may be confidently expected. From the character of the points still in difference, and the undoubted disposition of both parties to bring the matter to an early conclusion, I look with entire confidence to a prompt and satisfactory termination of the negotiation. Three commissioners were appointed shortly after the adjournment of Congress, under the act of the last session providing for the exploration and survey of the line which separates the States of Maine and New Hampshire from the British Provinces; they have been actively employed until their progress was interrupted by the inclemency of the season, and will resume their labors as soon as practicable in the ensuing year.

It is understood that their respective examinations will throw new light upon the subject in controversy, and serve to remove any erroneous impressions which may have been made elsewhere prejudicial to the rights of the United States. It was, among other reasons, with a view of preventing the embarrassments which, in our peculiar system of Government, impede and complicate negotiations involving the territorial rights of a State, that I thought it my duty as you have been informed on a previous occasion, to propose to the British Government, through its minister at Washington, that early steps should be taken to adjust the points of difference on the line of boundary from the entrance of Lake Superior to the most northwestern point of the Lake of the Woods, by the arbitration of a friendly Power, in conformity with the 7th article of the treaty of Ghent. No answer has yet been returned by the British Government to this proposition.

With Austria, France, Prussia, Russia, and the remaining powers of Europe, I am happy to inform you our relations continue to be of the most friendly character. With Belgium, a treaty of commerce and navigation, based upon liberal principles of reciprocity and equality, was concluded in March last, and, having been ratified by the Belgian Government, will be duly laid before the Senate. It is a subject of congratulation that it provides for the satisfactory adjustment of a long-standing question of controversy; thus removing the only obstacle which could obstruct the friendly and mutually advantageous intercourse between the two nations. A messenger has been despatched with the Hanoverian treaty to Berlin, where, according to stipulation, the ratifications are to be exchanged. I am happy to announce to you that, after many delays and difficulties, a treaty of commerce and navigation, between the United States and Portugal, was concluded and signed at Lisbon, on the 26th of August last, by the Plenipotentiaries of the two Governments. Its stipulations are founded upon those principles of mutual liberality and advantage which the United States have always sought to make the basis of their intercourse with foreign Powers, and it is hoped they will tend to foster and strengthen the commercial intercourse of the two countries.

Under the appropriation of the last session of Congress, an agent has been sent to Germany for the purpose of promoting the interests of our tobacco-trade. The commissioners appointed under the convention for the adjustment of claims of the United States upon Mexico having met and organized at Washington in August last, the papers in possession of the Government relating to those claims were communicated to the board. The claims not embraced by that convention are now the subject of negotiation between the two Governments, through the medium of our Minister at Mexico. Nothing has occurred to disturb the harmony of our relations with the different Governments of South America. I regret, however, to be obliged to inform you that the claims of our citizens upon the late Republic of Columbia have not yet been satisfied by the separate Governments into which it has been resolved.

The charge d'affaires of Brazil having expressed the intention of his Government not to prolong the treaty of 1828, it will cease to be obligatory upon either party on the 12th day of Dec. 1841, when the extensive commercial intercourse between the United States and that vast empire will no longer be regulated by express stipulations. It affords me pleasure to communicate to you that the Government of Chili has entered into an agreement to indemnify the claimants in the case of the *Madeconian*, for American property seized in 1810; and to add, that information has been received which justifies the hope of an early adjustment of the remaining claims upon that Government.

The commissioners appointed in pursuance of the convention between the United States and Texas, for marking the boundary between them, have, according to the last report received from our commissioner, surveyed and established the whole extent of the boundary north along the western bank of the Sabine river, from its entrance into the Gulf of Mexico to the thirty-second degree of north latitude. The commission adjourned on the 16th of June last, to reassemble on the 1st of November, for the purpose of establishing accurately the intersection of the thirty-second degree of latitude with the western bank of the Sabine, and the meridian line thence to Red River. It is presumed that the work will be concluded in the present season.

The present sound condition of their finances, and the success with which embarrassments in regard to them, at times apparently insurmountable, have been overcome, are matters upon which the people and Government of the United States may well congratulate themselves. An overflowing Treasury, however it may be regarded as an evidence of public prosperity, is seldom conducive of the permanent welfare of any people; and experience has demonstrated its incompatibility with the salutary action of political institutions like those of the U. States. Our safest reliance for financial efficiency and independence has, on the contrary, been found to consist in ample resources unencumbered with debt; and, in this respect, the Federal Government occupies a singularly fortunate and truly enviable position.

When I entered upon the discharge of my official duties in March, 1837, the act for the distribution of the surplus revenue was in a course of rapid execution. Nearly twenty-eight millions of dollars of the public moneys were, in pursuance of its provisions deposited with the States in the months of January, April and July of that year. In May there occurred a general suspension of specie payments by the banks, including, with very few exceptions, those in which the public moneys were deposited, and upon whose fidelity the Government had unfortunately made itself dependent for the revenues which had been collected from the people, and were indispensable to the public service. This suspension, and the excesses in banking and commerce out of which it arose, and which were greatly aggravated by its occurrence, made, to a great extent, unavailable the principal part of the public money then on hand; suspended the collection of many millions accruing on our merchants' bonds; and greatly reduced the revenue arising from customs and public lands. These effects have continued to operate, in various degrees, to the present period; and, in addition to the decrease in the revenue thus produced, two and a half millions of duties have been relinquished by two biennial reductions under the act of 1833, and probably as much more upon the importation of iron for railroads, by special legislation.

Whilst such has been our condition for the last four years in relation to revenue, we have, during the same period been subjected to an unavoidable continuance of large extraordinary expenses necessarily growing out of past transactions, and which could not be immediately arrested without great prejudice to the public interest. Of these, the charge upon the Treasury, in consequence of the Cherokee treaty alone, without adverting to others arising out of Indian treaties, has already exceeded five millions of dollars; that for the prosecution of measures for the removal of the Seminole Indians, which were found in progress, has been nearly fourteen millions; and the public buildings have required the unusual sum of nearly three millions.

It affords me, however, great pleasure to be able to say, that, from the commencement of this period to the present day, every demand upon the Government, at home or abroad, has been promptly met. This has been done, not only without creating a permanent debt, or a resort to additional taxation, in any form, but in the midst of a steadily progressive reduction of existing burdens upon the people, leaving still a considerable balance of available funds, which will remain in the Treasury at the end of the year. The small amount of Treasury notes, not exceeding four and a half millions of dollars, still outstanding, and less by twenty-three millions than the United States have in deposit with the States, is composed of such only as are not yet due, or have not been presented for payment.—They may be redeemed out of the accruing revenue, if the expenditures do not exceed the amount within which they may, it is thought, be kept without prejudice to the public interest, and the reverse shall prove to be as large as may justly be anticipated.

Among the reflections arising from the contemplation of these circumstances, one not the least gratifying, is the consciousness that the Government had the resolution and the ability to adhere in every exigency to the sacred obligations of law; to execute all its contracts according to the requirements of the constitution; and thus to present, when most needed, a rallying point by which the business of the whole country might be brought back to a safe and unvarying standard—a result vitally important as well to the interests as to the morals of the people. There can surely now be no difference of opinion in regard to the incalculable evils that would have arisen if the Government, at that critical moment, had suffered itself to be deterred from upholding the only true standard of value, either by the pressure of adverse circumstances or the violence of unmerited denunciation. The manner in which the people sustained the performance of this duty was highly honorable to their fortitude and patriotism. It cannot fail to stimulate their agents to adhere, under all circumstances, to the line of duty; and to satisfy them of the safety with which a course really right, and demanded by a financial crisis, may, in a community like ours, be pursued, however apparently severe its immediate operation.

The policy of the Federal Government in extinguishing as rapidly as possible the national debt, and, subsequently, in resisting every temptation to create a new one, deserves to be regarded in the same favorable light. Among the many objections to a national debt, the certain tendency of public securities to concentrate ultimately in the hands of foreign stockholders, is one which is every day gathering strength. Already have the resources of many of the States, and the future industry of their citizens, been indefinitely mortgaged to the subjects of European Governments, to the amount of twelve millions annually, to pay the constantly accruing interest on borrowed money—a sum exceeding half the ordinary revenue of the whole United States. The pretext which this relation affords to foreigners to scrutinize the management of our domestic affairs, if not actually to intermeddle with them, presents a subject for earnest attention, not to say serious alarm. Fortunately, the Federal Government, with the exception of an obligation entered into in behalf of the District of Columbia, which